TESLA

SIGNS

Unplugged and unwound, Tesla's dynamic duo proves that you don't need electricity to create excitement

LESSON

So, the Marshall stacks are rolled away and you and your colleague are handed acoustics. How do two unplugged pickers make a song rock with these instruments? Guitarists Tommy Skoech and Frank Hannon do so by focusing on *rhythm*.

Hannon (Gtr.1) provides the "floating" rhythm, playing mostly eighth and 16th-note phrases. This role enables him to fill a lot. But playing hard isn't essential, since his function is not to nail down the rock rhythm, but to keep the pulse moving throughout the tune. Skoech (Gtr.2) provides the "driving" rhythm, emphasizing the quarter-note beats most of the time.

Another strong rock device employed by our two heroes is to gang up on the kicks in the choruses. Particularly effective is their use of *16th-note anticipations*. Anticipation is a technique whereby you play a note or chord "early" to create a driving sense of forward motion. A good example of this occurs during the chorus in bar 11. Instead of playing the C chord on beat 3, they "kick" it one 16th note early ("Signs, signs, *every*where..."). This effect becomes more pronounced when the kick is held over into the next beat.

These devices become logical when heard in context with the lyrics. When accompanying a vocal line on an acoustic guitar, remember to let the vocal phrasing determine the rhythms.

—Paul Robinson

BASS NOTES

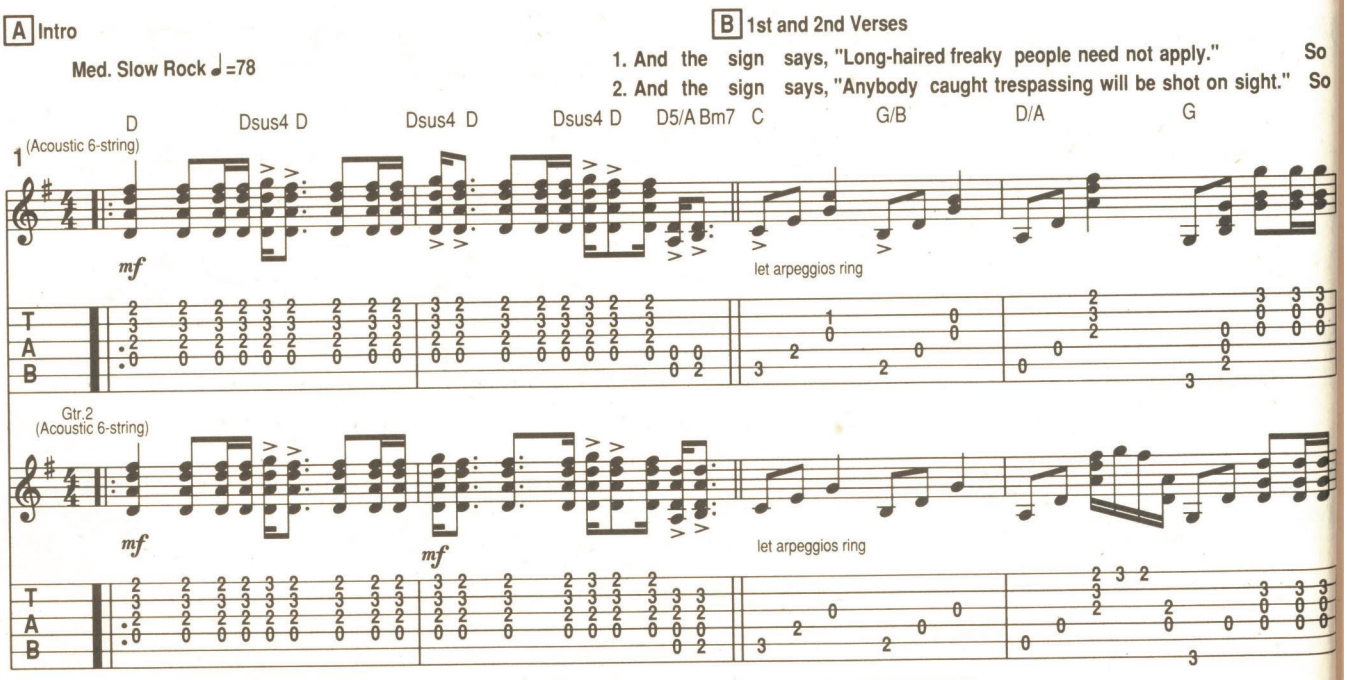
Not only does Tesla pay homage to early '70s rock with their live version of "Signs," but bassist Brian Wheat also pays tribute to Paul McCartney [*see this month's Bass Explorations column for more on the master from Liverpool*]. He even uses a Hofner Beatle bass popularized by McCartney in the '60s. Wheat jumps into the McCartney bag with both feet, playing rhythmically, melodically and relaxed while retaining his own style, which is more rhythmically inspired by McCartney than anything else. He really captures McCartneys busy, thumping style (listen to some late-'60s Beatles and you'll see what I mean).

Don't let all the 16th notes make you nervous. The tempo is relatively slow so you don't need superchops to play this tune. You will, however, need a little PMA (Proper Mental Attitude). The goal here is to achieve a certain feel—an atmosphere. Remember where this song was recorded; in an intimate club setting, sitting down and not running around an arena stage at full volume. *—Mike DuClos*

From the Geffen recording FIVE MAN ACOUSTICAL JAM

SIGNS

Words and Music by
L. EMMERSON
Guitar Transcription by Paul Robinson



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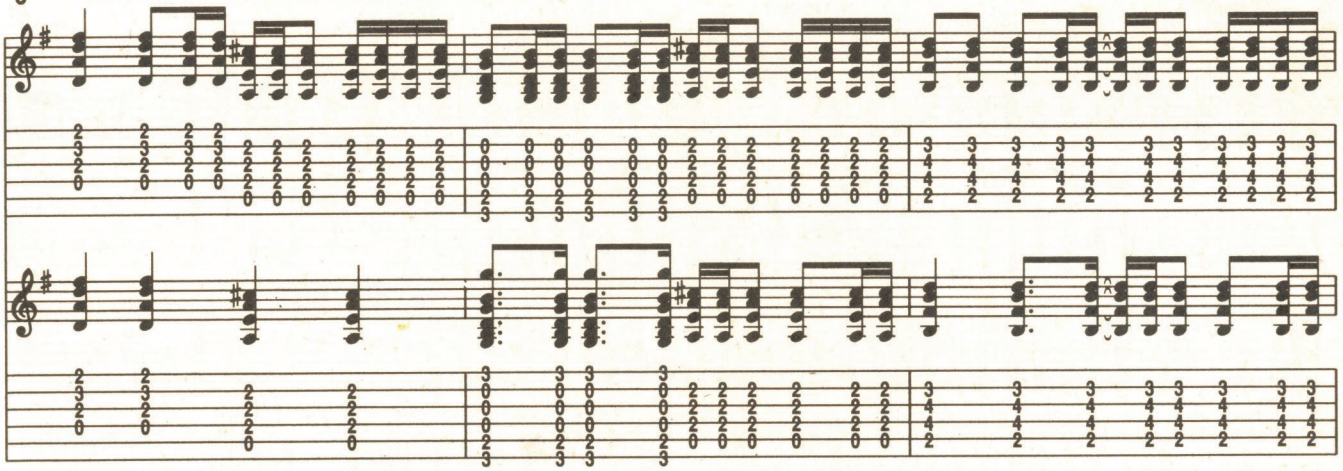
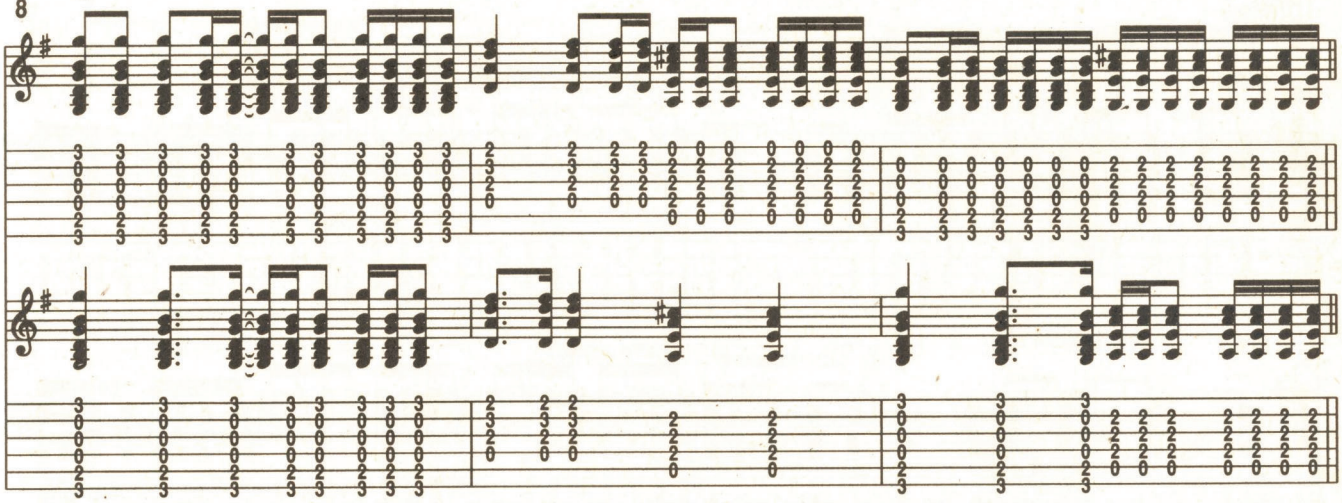
I tucked my hair up under my hat, and I went in to ask him, "Why?"
I jumped the fence and I yelled at her house, "Hey! What gives you the right

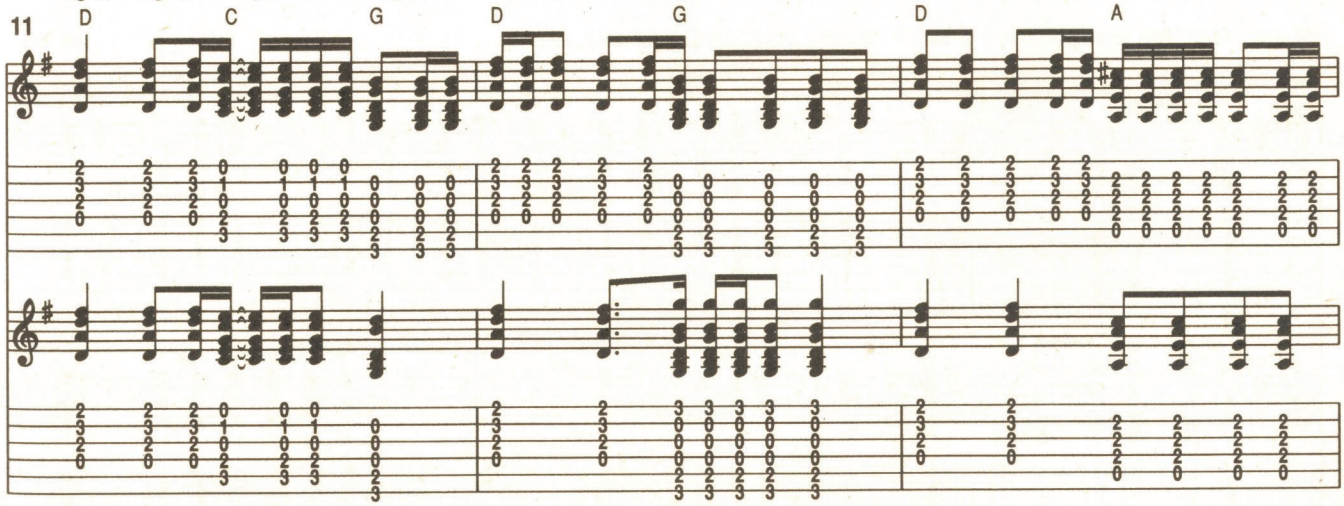
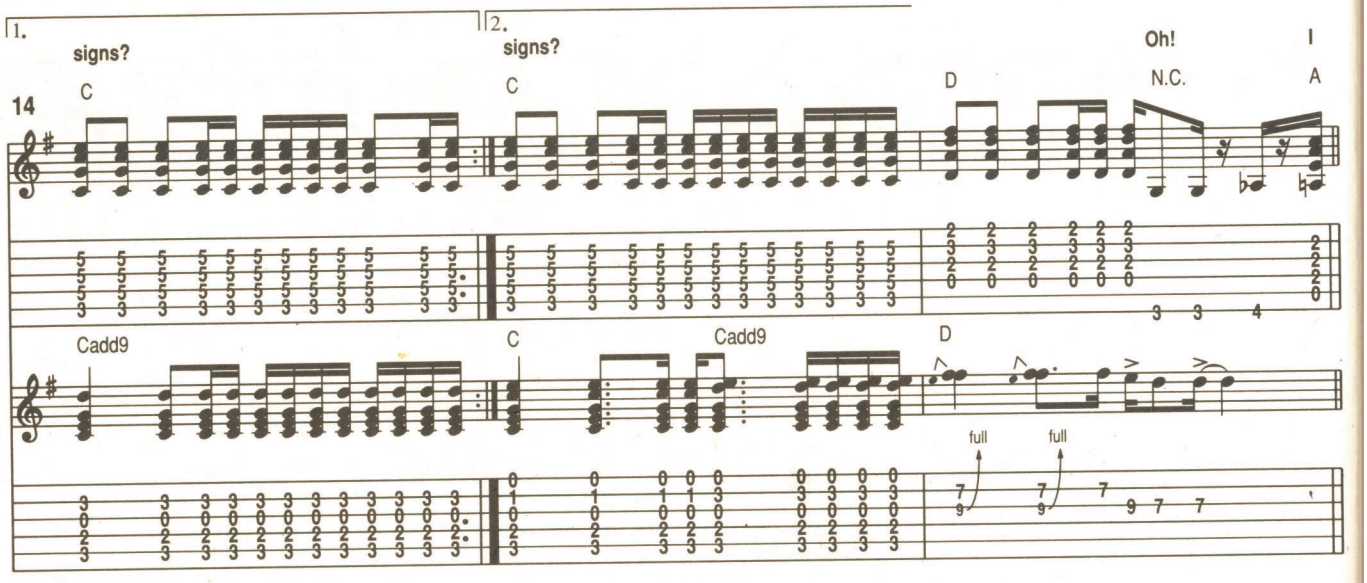
He said, "You look like a fine outstandin' young
to put up a fence to keep me out, or to

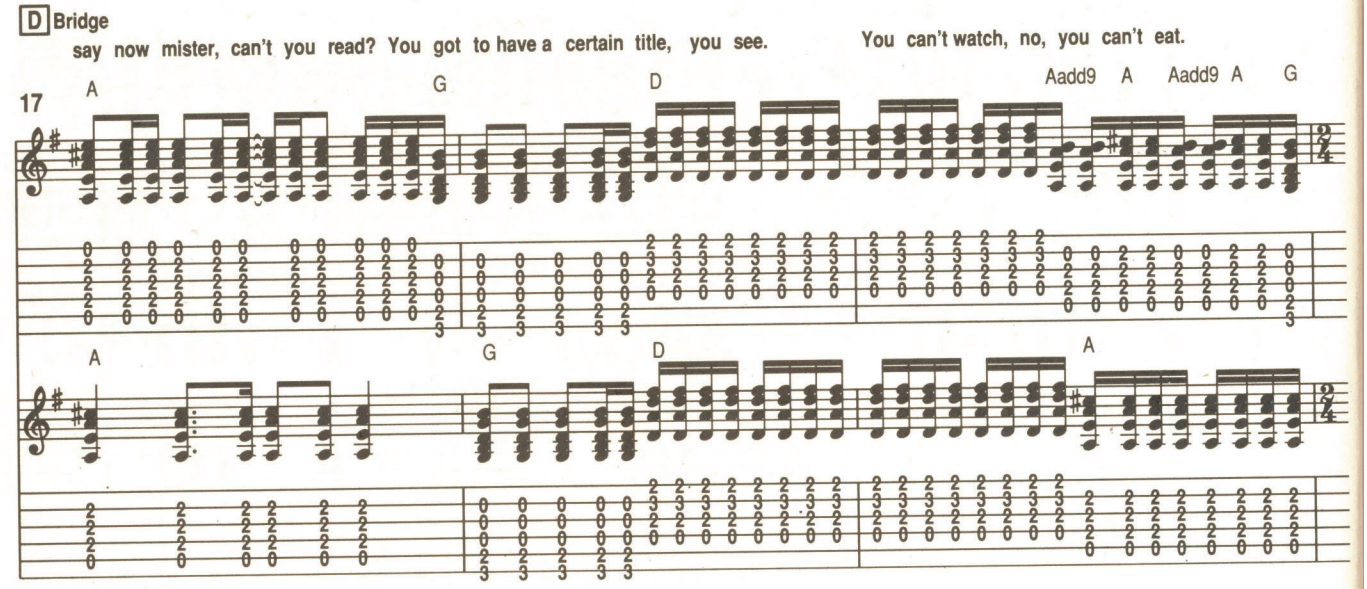
5 D A G A Bm

man. I think you'll do."
keep mother nature in?"

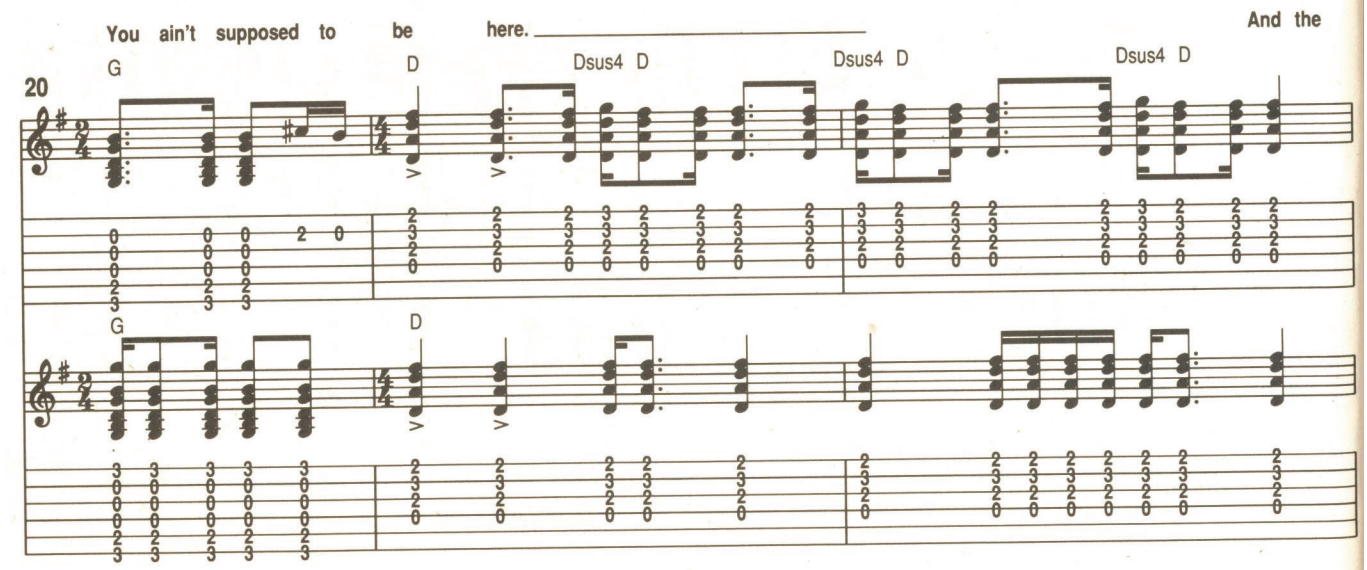
A so I took off my hat and said, "Imagine that. Huh, me workin' for you." Oh!
If God was here he'd tell it to your face, "Man, you're some kinda sinner."

8 G D A G A

C 1st and 2nd Choruses

Signs, signs, everywhere the signs. Fuckin' up the scenery, breakin' my mind. Do this, don't do that. Can't you read the

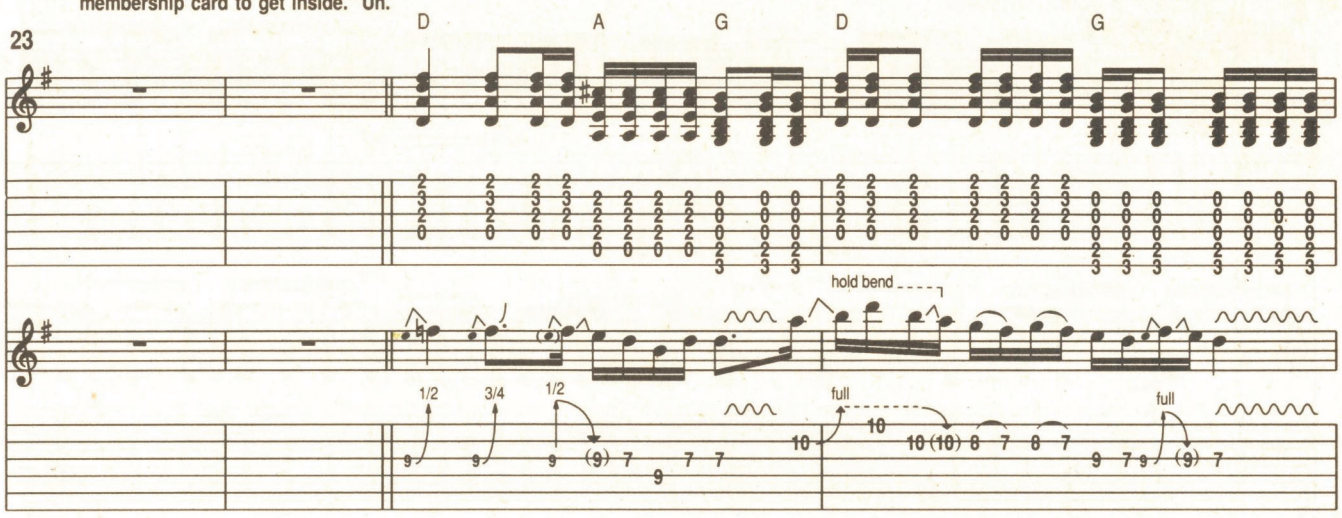
11 D C G D G D A


1.
signs?
2.
signs?
Oh!
I
14
C
C
D
N.C.
A
Cadd9
C
Cadd9
D
full
full

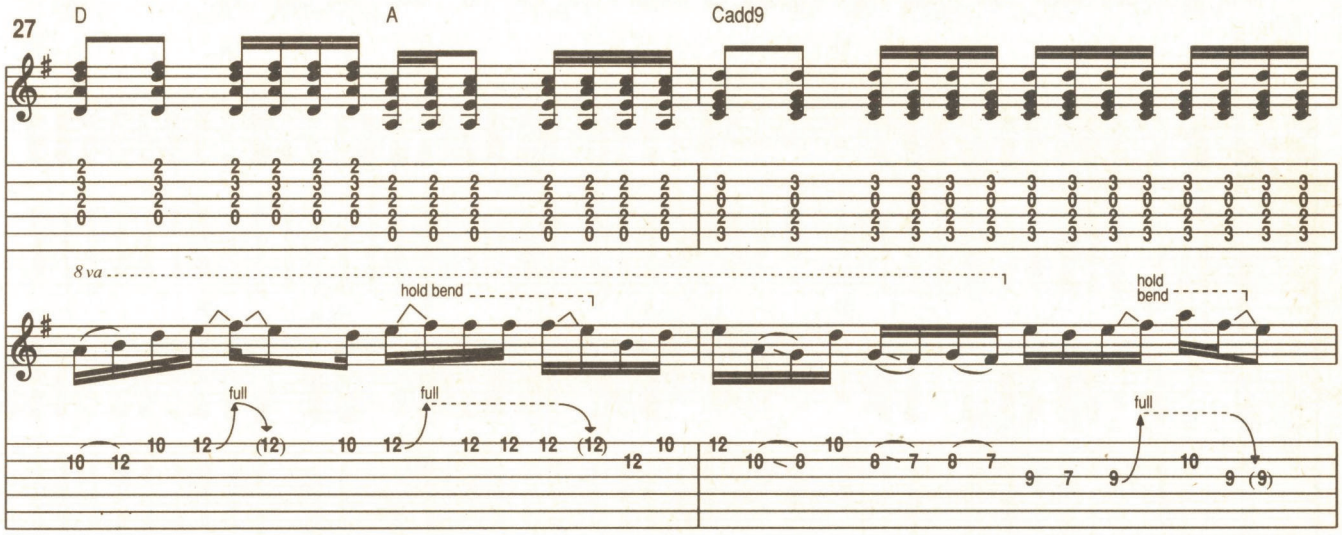

D Bridge
say now mister, can't you read? You got to have a certain title, you see.
You can't watch, no, you can't eat.
17
A
G
D
Aadd9
A
Aadd9
A
G
A
G
D
A


You ain't supposed to be here.
And the
20
G
D
Dsus4
D
Dsus4
D
Dsus4
D
G
D

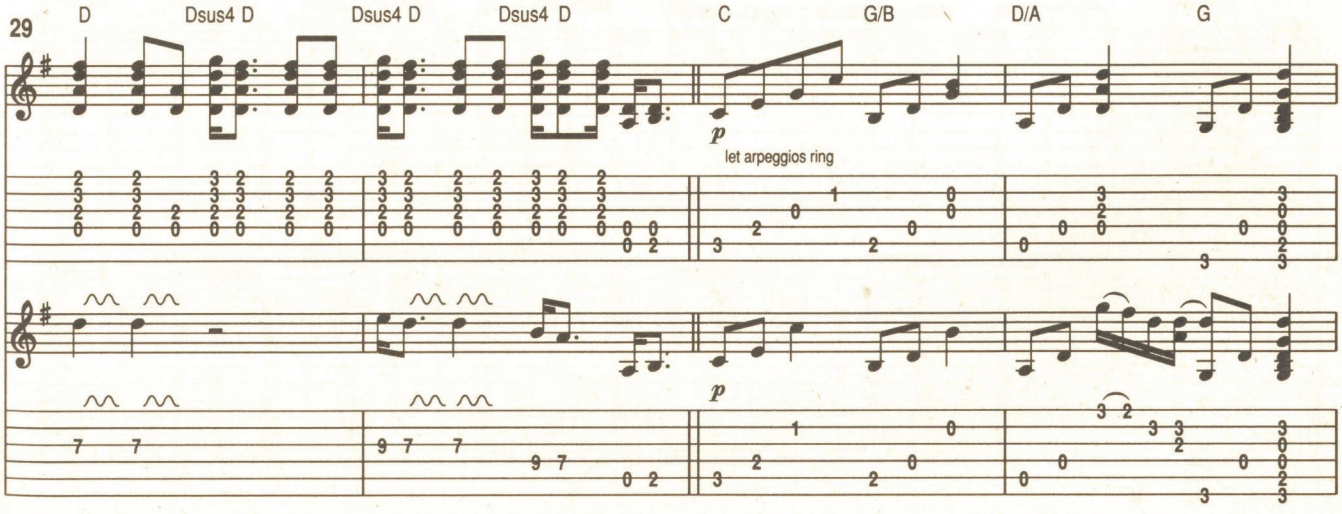
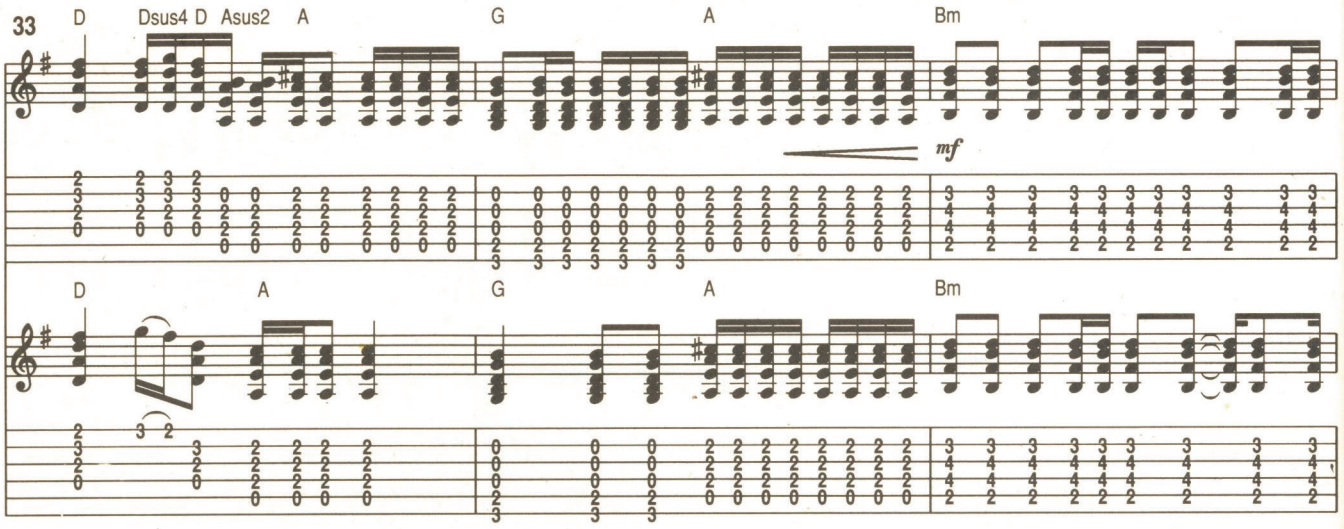
E Guitar Solo

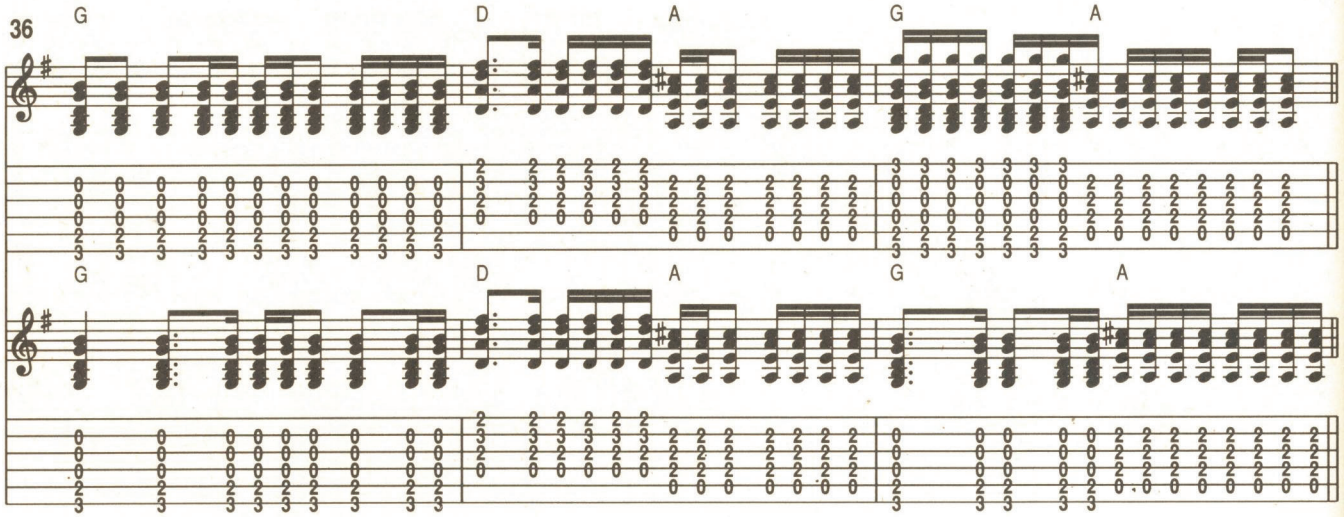
sign says, "You've got to have a membership card to get inside." Uh.





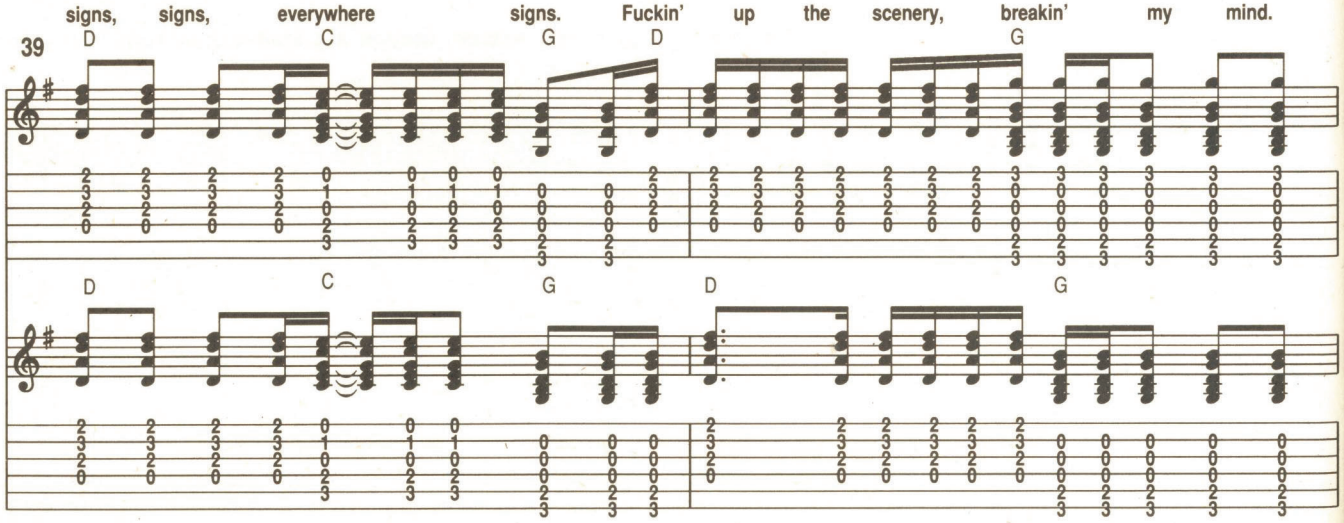
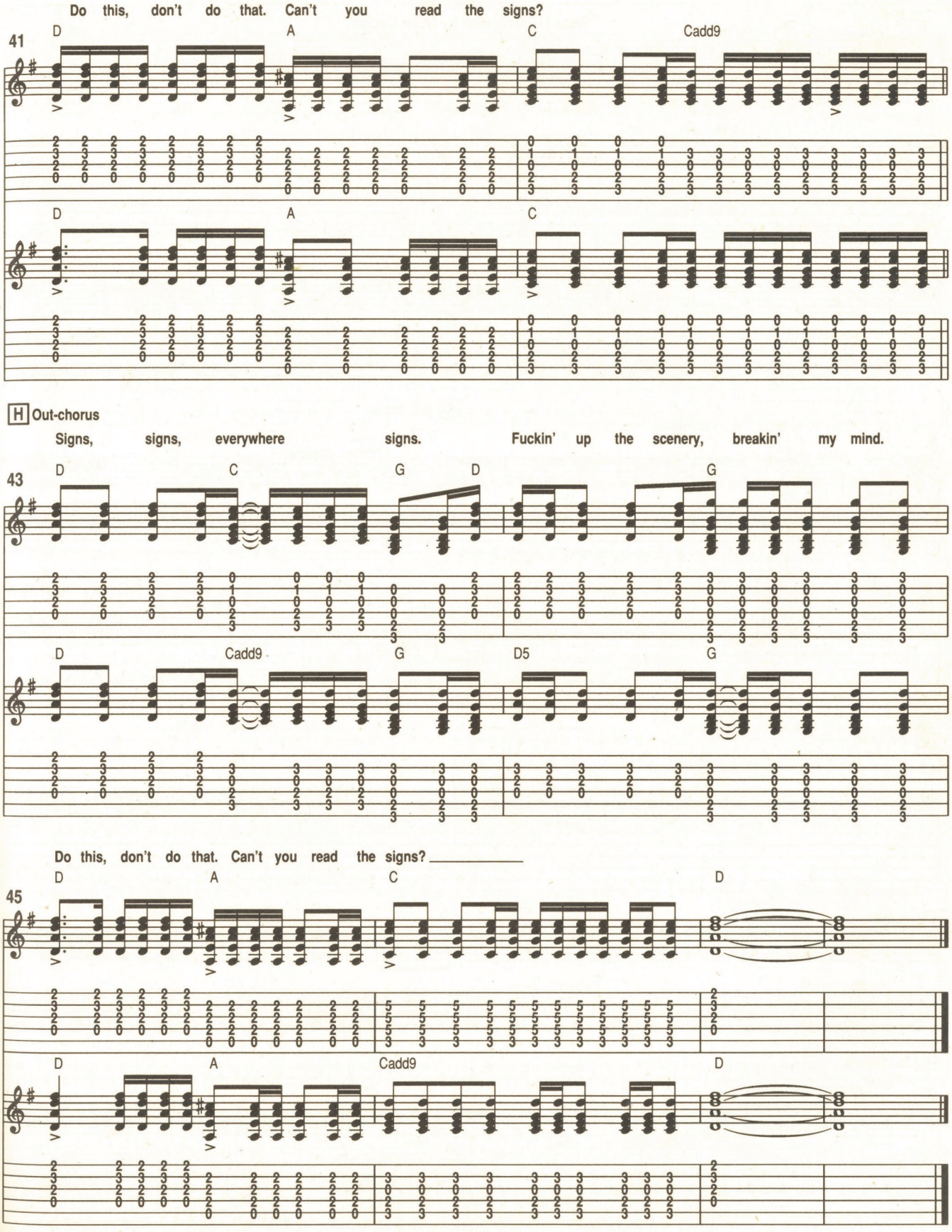
F 3rd Verse

3. The sign says, "Everybody welcome. Come in and kneel down and pray." Then they

pass around the plate at the end of it all and I didn't have a penny to pay. A so I got me a pen and a paper and I

made up my own fuckin' sign. I said, "Thank you, Lord, for thinkin' 'bout me. I'm alive and doin fine." Oh,



G 3rd Chorus

signs, signs, everywhere signs. Fuckin' up the scenery, breakin' my mind.



Do this, don't do that. Can't you read the signs?
41
D
A
C
Cadd9
D
A
C
H Out-chorus
Signs, signs, everywhere signs. Fuckin' up the scenery, breakin' my mind.
43
D
C
G
D
G
D
Cadd9
G
D5
G
Do this, don't do that. Can't you read the signs?
45
D
A
C
D
D
A
Cadd9
D